

# MISSOURI REENTRY PROCESS



*Report to the Governor*  
Year End 2007

## **Introduction**

*Almost 97% of the people now in Missouri's prisons will one day be released. Within three years of release, over a quarter of those will go back to prison for a new crime. This rate of recidivism is unacceptably high and expensive. For each new crime, there is a new victim and new costs to Missouri's communities. This trend is in the process of being reversed.*

As directed by Executive Order 05-33 signed by Governor Matt Blunt on September 21, 2005, the Missouri Department of Corrections continues to lead an interagency steering team for the Missouri Reentry Process.

The Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team meets regularly to work toward integrating successful offender reentry principles and practices into state agencies and communities throughout Missouri resulting in partnerships that enhance offender self-sufficiency, reduce reincarceration, and improve public safety.

## **History**

Missouri was chosen as the first state to implement a model created by the National Institute of Corrections in 2002. This philosophical framework is designed to improve the offender transition process during incarceration in an effort to increase public safety, diminish new victimization, make efficient use of state and local resources, and to ensure we are preparing offenders to be productive, law-abiding citizens.

Based upon analysis of Missouri's quantitative and qualitative baseline data, the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team identified factors that are highly correlated with successful transition or recidivism and developed strategies to address these factors. These factors included substance abuse, medical and mental health, transportation, education, employment, housing, family, and information sharing. Thirty-eight strategies were identified by the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team, focusing around the factors that promote success.

The model indicates the Department of Corrections alone cannot effectively address all issues offenders' face upon release into the community. Therefore, by forming strategic and tactical partnerships that enhance offender self-sufficiency, the mission of the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team is making a difference in the number of successful offenders in our communities.

## **Accomplishments in 2007**

- 1. The Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team continues to demonstrate one of the most extraordinary collaborations in state government.** This team was created in 2002 and has continued to meet on a monthly basis over the last five years. As time has advanced, additional agencies were invited to the table. The dedication and loyalty each of the members has displayed have played a large part in the success of the Missouri Reentry Process.

The steering team is comprised of the Department of Corrections, the Board of Probation and Parole, Department of Mental Health, Department of Social Services, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Economic Development, Department of Revenue, Department of Health and Senior Services, and the Office of State Court Administrators. In addition, membership also includes community organizations representing crime victims, law enforcement, treatment providers, the faith-based community; children of incarcerated parents and any others deemed necessary to accomplish the mission set forth.

The team continues to recognize that without assistance many ex-offenders will fail at leading law-abiding lives when they return home. This can result in new crimes being committed with a huge cost to taxpayers and their communities. The team continues to identify and implement strategies to keep offenders from returning to prison.

- 2. Transitional Housing Units are implemented in 11 institutions across the state.** The following institutions have successfully implemented a Transitional Housing Unit – Algoa Correctional Center, Boonville Correctional Center, Chillicothe Correctional Center, Cremer Therapeutic Community Center, Farmington Correctional Center, Maryville Treatment Center, Moberly Correctional Center, Missouri Eastern Correctional Center, Western Missouri Correctional Center, Western Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center, and Women's Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center. The focus of business in these units is to ensure offenders are prepared for return to their community. The offenders enter a Transitional Housing Unit approximately six months prior to release and receive various services including, but not limited to the following: academic and vocational education; obtaining identification; cognitive restructuring; mental health, medical and substance abuse treatment with continuity of care into the community; education on faith-based support; employability and life skills; employment services; information regarding child support; education on strengthening family relationships and pro-social community participation; Impact of Crime on Victims class; and other areas identified as critical to offenders' success.

- 3. Missouri Reentry Process continues as a national model.** The Department of Corrections along with the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team has provided consultation and best practices for Wisconsin and North Dakota during 2007, making 11 states that Missouri has assisted since 2005. In addition, representatives from the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team are often called on to present best reentry practices to states across the nation.
- 4. Missouri Reentry Process Steering Teams have expanded across the state of Missouri.** Thirty-three Missouri Reentry Process (MRP) Community Steering Teams have been established across the state. The community teams are comprised of representatives from community organizations, local and state agencies, faith-based organizations, Probation and Parole, local law enforcement, judiciary, local businesses, treatment providers, victims, ex-offenders and correctional staff. Each Community Steering Team collaborates on the application of Missouri Reentry Principles in their community. The goal of Community Steering Teams is to identify the needs of offenders (i.e. housing, employment, transportation, access to treatment etc.) in their community and partner to meet those needs, making their community stronger in the effort.
- 5. The Department of Corrections, in collaboration with the Department of Social Services, has implemented the Pre-release Medicaid application process.** This process allows Department of Corrections' staff to assist the most disabled offenders to apply for Medicaid 90 days prior to the offenders' release. The offenders will be notified within three days of their release from prison if they qualify for Medicaid benefits and will have access to both medical and mental health services.
- 6. The Department formed a partnership with the Missouri Veterans Commission to ensure incarcerated veterans are aware of veteran benefits and are able to receive assistance for a successful transition into the community.** There are approximately 2700 veterans incarcerated in the Missouri Department of Corrections. To assist veterans, an Incarcerated Veterans Reentry Coordinator provides a presentation to incarcerated veterans during the transitional phase of their incarceration and assists with completing applications for benefits and services.
- 7. Historically, offenders were released from prison without identification needed to obtain employment, rent an apartment or apply for benefits. Through the Department's partnership with the Department of Revenue, staff is assisting offenders to obtain state identification cards in five prisons prior to the offenders' release.** Currently the Department is working with the Department of Revenue to expand this project to all 20 Missouri prisons.
- 8. The Department formed a partnership with the Department of Health and Senior Services to assist offenders with obtaining birth certificates prior to**

**release.** Currently all 11 Transitional Housing Units are assisting offenders with this process.

- 9. The Community Partnerships (Family and Community Trust) were awarded a grant to hire 20 VISTA members to further the progress of offender reentry in Missouri communities within Jasper, Newton, Boone, Butler, Cape Girardeau, Pettis, Randolph, Jefferson, New Madrid, Knox, Schuyler, Ripley, St. Joseph, and Washington Counties.** The goals of the VISTA project are: build or maintain, and expand an ex-offender Reentry Advisory Group associated with each of the participating Community Partnership sites; make easily available the pertinent resources identified by the Reentry Group to all returning ex-offenders and the community in general; coordinate the building of a network of community support for children and family members of those incarcerated, as well as for returning ex-offenders; reduce employment barriers that confront returning ex-offenders by securing and promoting employment opportunities; address reducing and or overcoming mental health barriers that confront returning ex-offenders; address education/training issues that confront returning ex-offenders by seeking out educational opportunities; address housing/home plan issues that confront returning ex-offenders by seeking out potential housing sites and also resources for assisting those returning to live in family homes.
- 10. The Department has contracted with the Center for Women in Transition (CWIT) in St. Louis to provide post release services to male and female offenders who are being released without parole supervision to the St. Louis area.** This initiative is called Project Re-Connect. The contract was awarded in March 2006. To date approximately 150 individuals have been served. Post release services have been provided to a high risk population to include housing, medical, mental health, substance abuse treatment, case management, job placement, to name a few. Preliminary data indicates this initiative is successful and has prevented offenders from returning to prison.
- 11. The Department has partnered with the Missouri State Highway Patrol to allow offenders to take the written drivers license test at three correctional facilities.** Upon release, the offender will go to their local Missouri driver's license testing site to complete the driving portion of the test.
- 12. A pilot project was initiated at two Missouri prisons aimed at helping offenders obtain employment after release.** Kiosks were established in both institutions, which allowed offenders to access information about jobs. Employment information is accessible through the Division of Workforce Development web based labor exchange service at [www.missouricareersource.com](http://www.missouricareersource.com). The Missouri Department of Corrections and Division of Workforce Development are expanding the project to all of the Transitional Housing Units, as well as, to the St. Louis Community Release Center and the Kansas City Community Release Center.

- 13. The Department of Corrections received the Service Excellence Award at the 2007 Governor's Conference on Economic Development from Governor Matt Blunt.** This award was specifically given to the Missouri Reentry Process for the partnership with the Division of Workforce Development. The Service Excellence award was presented to the Department to recognize the collaborative excellence by a group of partners who have formed strategic alliances and have designed service excellence initiatives that have effectively served unique populations in the workforce system and have developed non-traditional pipelines to enhance economic opportunities for hard to serve populations.
- 14. Implementation of the enhanced Transition Accountability Plan has been completed in all areas of the Department.** The Transition Accountability Plan, the Department's case management tool, was redesigned to allow the sharing of information between all divisions of the Department of Corrections and allow each division to utilize the same document to track an offender's progress during all phases of incarceration and supervision.
- 15. The Department began the Innerchange Freedom Initiative at the Algoa Correctional Center and the Women's Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center, which provides a faith based reentry program to those offenders who choose to participate.**
- 16. Reentry Courts have been established across the state.** The use of the existing structure of Drug Courts to serve reentry purposes has been increasing. Currently there are 15 drug courts with approximately 114 participants. The agency continues to explore how the drug court model can be used to support the reentry practices beyond the current structure which focuses primarily on 120 Day Institutional Treatment Center releases.
- 17. The Department has partnered with the Department of Mental Health to provide continuity of care from prison to the community to seriously mentally ill offenders.** Prior to release an offender is referred to the Missouri Coalition of Community Mental Health Centers who links the offender to mental health services within the community they are to be released.

## **CHALLENGES**

Although many accomplishments have been noted, the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team continues to face challenges and barriers in implementing reentry practices and principles on a state-wide level.

- 1. The most acknowledged barrier is the inability to share information electronically with our partnering state agencies.** It has been noted that many

offenders who are under supervision of the Department of Corrections are also receiving or have received services from our partnering agencies. Unfortunately, duplicative efforts are massive in the assessment and planning stages when agencies cannot effectively share information. Advances in technological resources and incompatibility of computer databases have hindered information sharing between state agencies. The Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team continues to work on individual strategies to address the information sharing challenge.

2. One of the major components of successful offender reentry is having the **resources available to provide necessary treatment to offenders while incarcerated, while on community supervision and after completion of their sentence.** An offender cannot successfully reenter society without treating the issues that led to the initial criminal behavior. These treatment options include substance abuse services, academic education, vocational education and mental health services. Although adequate funding will always be an issue, the Department has pursued and continues to pursue alternative funding sources such as federal funds and offender generated funds like the Community Intervention Fee to sustain and restore these treatment options.
3. In September 2006, the **Social Security Administration put a moratorium on providing replacement social security cards to incarcerated offenders nationwide.** We have had conversations with the Regional Social Security Administration office that indicated language is being developed for a national agreement with all states and Corrections systems. They could give no timeframe on when this would be completed and until that time, no incarcerated offender will be issued a social security card. This challenge has limited the success of providing offender identification due to the documents needed such as social security card for proof of identity.

## **OUTCOME MEASURES TO DATE**

An outcome study has been completed by the Department's Research Unit of offenders released after spending five months or more in a Transitional Housing Unit. The study found that six months post release, offenders who received services in a Transitional Housing Unit had a 7.4% lower recidivism rate than offenders who were not housed in a Transitional Housing Unit for 5 months or more. Twelve months post release the reduction of recidivism was 8.2%. In addition, the reduction in recidivism after two years was 12.4%.

The results continue to be encouraging. As the number of offenders who go through the reentry process increases and the time from release increases, the reentry process will significantly reduce the number of offenders being returned to prison. As Missouri moves forward with the Missouri Reentry Process all offenders will receive reentry services prior to release.

## **GOALS FOR 2008**

1. Further identify barriers to reentry and recommend system, policy and practice reforms to make reentry more successful for individuals going home from prison.
2. Continue coordination within the Missouri Reentry Process Steering Team to ensure federal, state and local resources are used most efficiently, reduce duplicative efforts and maximize the effectiveness of our existing resources.
3. Further identify best practices and promote them at a state and local level.
4. Continue data reviews to ensure the reentry philosophy is positively impacting recidivism.
5. Continue service and technical assistance to other states as they incorporate reentry into their Departments of Corrections.

## **IN CLOSING...**

The year 2007 was a very productive one for the Missouri Reentry Process. We were successful in expanding the local Missouri Reentry Process teams across the state, establishing new partnerships and providing more services to offenders. Outcome data shows the Missouri Reentry Process is indeed making strides towards our mission of enhancing offender self-sufficiency, reducing re-incarceration and improving public safety.

During 2008, we will continue to support local Missouri Reentry Process Steering teams as they strengthen community partnerships on a local level. We look forward to providing support and technical assistance as needed. While it is easy to focus solely on reentry efforts in Missouri we must not forget about the importance of sharing our expertise with other states as they move forward in their reentry efforts.

The MRP Steering Team continues to track the progress of the Second Chance Act which passed the House in November 2007. The purpose of the Second Chance Act is to reduce recidivism, increase public safety and help states and communities to better address the growing population of ex-offenders returning to communities. The bill will focus on four areas: jobs, housing, mental health and substance abuse treatment, and strengthening families.

The next report on progress of the Missouri Reentry Process will be submitted in January 2009. Should you have any questions, please contact the Director of the Department of Corrections, Larry Crawford at (573) 751-2389.